



## Remembering the Lessons of 9-11

By U.S. Sen. John Cornyn

Our country will soon observe the fifth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that claimed more than 3,000 innocent American lives. That was a day that changed America, perhaps forever.

Over those five years, we have lost the feeling of national unity we generated in the immediate aftermath of the assault on our soil. But it's important that we do not lose sight of the lessons we've learned, or should have learned, from that tragic day.

As the U.S. has emerged as the world's beacon for individual freedom, our enemies have learned they cannot defeat the U.S. military on an open battlefield. They know their only hope is the short attention span of the American people. We're a peace-loving people, and we become impatient with war and its costs.

It is now increasingly apparent that the war on terrorism is not a conventional contest. It is instead a guerrilla action, a war of attrition, a test that requires not only strength, but national will. The war on terrorism is similar to the Cold War, which required vigilance and commitment over three generations before we prevailed.

Our military has done an outstanding job delivering justice to al Qaeda operatives from Afghanistan to Iraq over the past five years. However, it would be foolhardy to believe that the threat of Islamic fascism has passed.

This is a conflict deeply rooted in the ruthless and repeated actions of a global, extremist movement that has hijacked one of the world's leading religions to advance their imperialistic and anti-democratic views through any and all violent means possible. If successful, they would oppress millions of peaceful Muslims and operate as an exporter of acts of terrorism against the rest of the world.

There should be no doubt that al Qaeda's goal is the destruction of the United States, and any nation that upholds freedom and individual liberties. We do not seek war, but we understand that sometimes war must be fought – and won. We are now in such a time.

Our responsibility to our children and grandchildren is to see this war through. Even if we have a healthy debate on how best to defend

America and defeat terrorism, we should always agree that we must win this war.

We have no excuse if we forget the lessons of 9-11. There are constant reminders available about the consequences of failure. In the last few months, several critically-acclaimed movies have brought the horror of that day home again to us all.

One film, "World Trade Center," centers on two Port Authority Police first responders who were trapped under the "pile," the burning rubble of Towers 1 and 2, for 12 hours. Their stories movingly remind us of what these heroes experienced on that terrible day. And it reminds us of the ways this tragedy touched us all.

Earlier this year, two films depicting the gut-wrenching last hours of United Flight 93 were also released. This was the hijacked flight, believed to be aimed at the U.S. Capitol, that went down in rural Pennsylvania as brave crew and passengers fought the terrorists.

And if we needed any more reminders of the continuing threat, British authorities this month broke up a plot to plant hard-to-detect explosives in several U.S.-bound jumbo jets flying out of London. Those fanatic plotters may be in custody, but the threat continues.

I believe that we must combat Islamic fascism worldwide by supporting vigorously those who advocate democracy and human rights in the troubled areas of the world where terrorism breeds. Freedom is the only long-term antidote to the poison being spread by these terrorists.

Over 100 years ago, the philosopher George Santayana noted: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Our battle against al Qaeda and related terrorist operations promises to be long, and taxing and costly in terms of blood and treasure. But the cost of forgetting the lessons of 9-11 would be much higher.

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